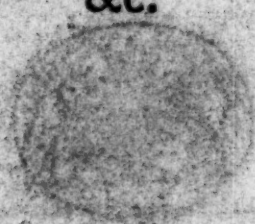


1467. 6. 37.
~~66005~~
1-3

LORENZINO DI MEDICI,

&c.



Rough (See W.)
v



Wanting the signed dedication

LORENZINO DI MEDICI,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

Liceat paulisper ludere.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, JUNIOR, AND W. DAVIES,
(SUCCESSORS TO MR. CADELL) STRAND.

1797.

It is now more than ten years since this was written
it certainly does not err from being outraged
or extravagant - but it, I fear, ^{manifestly} borders upon
+ 'chill and lifeless imbecillity' and this too I
thought still more than in diction.

I had then been reading Hurd's, Sir
Thomas More, Armstrong's ^{forced marriage} ~~and~~ and in
striving to be natural ~~but~~ out-simplified
simplicity.

MS. A. 1809.

Johnson somewhat ^{harshly} ~~roughly~~ of Chary Chase.
vid. Life of Addison.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THOUGH, since the fatal Critic of Mr. Sheridan, neither the Theatre nor the Press have been successful in the production of Tragedies, yet 'The Indians,' and 'Ines de Castro' sufficiently prove, that the serious Muse has not forgotten to speak English. Whether the following attempt has any claim to the honours of a legitimate Drama, it remains with the reader to determine. Some liberties have been taken with historical facts, which in a poetical composition will not, it is hoped, be deemed unreasonable. For the absence of supernatural agency and outrageous horror, which, it must be owned, form the vitality of all popular writings, the Writer of *Lorenzino di Medici* can offer no solid excuse. He only promises amendment in future.

ADVERTISEMENT.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORENZINO DI MEDICI.

ALEXANDER III. *Duke of Florence.*

GINORI.

MARGARET OF AUSTRIA.

LAURENTILLA.

*For the foundation of the Fable, see ROBERTSON'S
Charles V. ROSCOE'S Life of Lorenzo di Medici.*

LORENZINO DI MEDICI.

ACT I. SCENE I.

MARGARET. LAURENTILLA.

MARGARET.

I PRAY you, dearest Lady, say not so.
You Florentines are apt to praise too much,
Decking with holiday and courtly phrase
The hero of your story. I confess
He whom we speak of is a noble youth,
And merits well the Dukedom he possesses;
Yet surely, Laurentilla, there *are* some,
Who in their native energy of mind,
And in the cultivation of those arts
Which most adorn humanity, surpass
Even him, whom you so lavishly commend.

LAURENTILLA.

By my true faith, my ever-honour'd lady,
 I did not think we should have differ'd thus.
 I was prepar'd to find you eloquent
 In praise of one so soon to be your Lord.

MARGARET.

Nay, do not misconceive me. If I seem'd
 To speak with coldness of his high desert,
 'Twas not because I lightly thought of him,
 But that I valued others more. In truth,
 It was the sportive fluency of speech
 With which you rais'd this mortal to the skies,
 That induc'd me to use those humbler terms
 You thus indignantly reject.

LAURENTILLA.

Believe me,
 I said but what I thought: for on my honour
 Were I to choose from the surrounding throng
 Of gallant youths, who grace the Tuscan court,
 Him, whom I deem most worthy of applause,

I should select the Duke, I know not one,
 Who, in exploits of martial enterprize,
 In polish'd manners, and in manly sense,
 Deserves to be compar'd with him.

MARGARET.

Fie on't, fie!

Have you forgot your brother, Laurentilla?

Even if the Duke be all that you describe,

'Tis Lorenzino made him what he is.

He is an image, fashion'd by the hand,

Owing alike its beauties and defects

To the same master-mind, which gave it form.

Surely you are unjust when you prefer

The copy to th' original.

LAURENTILLA.

Dear lady,

I am most slow to speak a word of blame,

Against a brother whom I love so well;

And above all a brother such as mine;

Who, and I but repeat the world's report,

Is blest with talents which are found in few :
Yet were I bound to mark him as he is,
I should pourtray him as a man who loves,
Rather the fame of virtue than itself :
One somewhat conscious of superior worth,
And much too fond of popular applause.

MARGARET.

You are too grave, my gentle moralist,
And view his foibles with a steadier eye,
Than the young dames of this luxurious city.
We must enquire his character of them.
Will they not tell us, he is all that love,
Studious to please our wayward sex, desires ?
That soft persuasion hangs upon his lip,
And mirth and sportful wit upon his tongue ?
Will they not tell us, in some happy hour
The graces join'd to form his frame without,
And the sweet Muse, presiding at his birth,
Kindled within the fire of sacred song ?
If, after these and other proofs, I fear,

Of estimation shown to him by those
Whom man was made to cherish and to serve;
He is not unacquainted with his worth;
His vanity perhaps may be forgiven,
Even by the sternest monitor.

LAURENTILLA.

Most true ;
Nor will I with undue severity
Dwell longer on his faults. My purpose, lady,
Was not to censure him, but to support
The Prince his master : who, without his follies,
Possesses all those lighter qualities,
Which eloquently plead for Lorenzino.

MARGARET.

Should I dissent in this from your opinion,
Meseems, I should have reason on my side.
Is the Duke skill'd with equal art to catch
The Attic graces of the comic scene ?
Ranks he amongst the writers of our age,
Who have assign'd stability to speech,

Teaching their Italy to rival Greece?
 Even in the martial exercise of arms,
 Bears he as many laurels on his brow
 As the thrice victor in the tournament,
 The thrice-crown'd Lorenzino? These, perhaps,
 Are but inferior glories, yet are such
 As the young Prince with pride might call his own.

LAURENTILLA.

My brother is much favour'd by your Highness,
 And would be vain indeed, did he o'erhear
 How warm you are in his defence.

MARGARET.

I speak,
 With freedom, Laurentilla, to my friends,
 And much rejoice to place you on the list
 Of those most dear to me.—Of this enough.
 I praise your brother with the greater ease,
 Because the Duke whom I am doom'd to wed,
 Has no impetuous interest in my heart;
 And therefore leaves me power to judge of others,

Unbias'd by the violence of passion.
It is my reason, rather than my love,
Bids me accept the proffer of his hand.
To say that we prefer to all the world,
The man to whom we plight our faith, is scarcely
Allow'd to the condition of mankind;
And least of all to those of royal birth.
It is enough, if no anterior claim,
No fondness for another intervene,
To render us perfidious. For myself,
I had no will, and therefore am well pleas'd,
That they who have the guidance of my fate,
Have chosen one who merits my regard.

SCENE II.

LORENZINO, MARGARET, LAURENTILLA.

LORENZINO.

Health and fair greeting to the Princess Margaret.
If I intrude upon her morning hours,
My wishes are ill-tim'd.

MARGARET.

No, Lorenzino;

We are mere idlers, and rejoice to see you.

LAURENTILLA.

Whence come you, brother?

LORENZINO.

From the council-chamber :

Where my young Sov'reign acts the Duke most nobly ;
Administ'ring justice with as strict an aim,
As he of yore, the Cretan lawgiver.

MARGARET.

Said you the council-chamber ? Has the Duke
Appear'd in public since his father's death ?

LORENZINO.

Eager to sacrifice his own desires
To the more sacred duties of his office,
His *first* concern is to do good to those
O'er whom it was allotted him to rule :
His next, which with weak men had been the first,

Will be to pay the homage of his sighs
To beauty and the lady Margaret.

MARGARET.

You are more courtly than your master, Sir.

LORENZINO.

Nay, trust me, if he shone but half as much
In the bright circles of your lovely sex,
As he excels in knowledge of mankind
And the discovery of deep-hidden truth,
He were a phoenix. Ere I left the court,
Two men appear'd before him ; one complain'd
Of an agreement broken, yet produc'd
No witness in behalf of his report :
The other, fix'd and firm, denied the whole :
He who complain'd, averr'd that this affair
Occurr'd whilst they were sitting on a stone.
“ Stones have been heard to speak, exclaim'd the Prince,
“ The stone shall be the witness of the deed,
“ And I will wait till it be brought to me.
“ You will have *long* to wait, then, said the knave,

"For it is some way off." At this the Duke
Urg'd his confession that he knew the place,
Till much confus'd, with hesitating tongue
The baffled wretch acknowledg'd his deceit.

LAURENTILLA.

'Tis a shrewd tale, and not ill told, my brother.

LORENZINO.

I thank you, Laurentilla : in your praise
I find sufficient reason for content,
For it is given with a sparing tongue.

MARGARET.

She is indeed, by far, too sparing, Sir ;
And therefore, Lorenzino, should it be
The Duke's good pleasure to fulfil the will
Of his dead fire, and lead me to the altar,
We shall be studious to reward your merit.

LORENZINO.

I am much honour'd by your notice, Lady ;
And as encouragement is apt to make
Those who receive it bolder than before,

Forgive me, if I ask you to survey
My new-form'd cabinet of chosen pictures:
Such as may stand to late posterity,
Enroll'd amongst the noblest works of art,
To show the world what Italy produc'd.

MARGARET.

I am not wholly mistress of my time ;
My worthy counsellor, the good Ginori,
Is at this hour most wont to visit me.
Were I to flight his service by my absence,
His bluntness would assail me with reproach,
Which I should wish to shun. Yet do not fear
But ere the morn expires I shall attend you.

LAURENTILLA.

O how I love that weather-beaten foldier !
He seems amongst the nobles of the court
An ancient oak amid a grove of firs,
Rugged in shape, but firmest in the heart.

LORENZINO.

Aye, Laurentilla, he is one of those
Who think the Graces are at war with truth ;
And Virtue, were she habited in silk,
Would be disown'd, and driven from his door.

SCENE III.

MARGARET, LAURENTILLA, LORENZINO,
GINORI.

MARGARET.

Welcome, Ginori ; we have waited for you :
How is it with you, my respected guardian ?

GINORI.

Well, lady ; well as these bad times permit.

LORENZINO.

It is a task most difficult to judge
With candour of the day that passes o'er us.
In childhood all delights, for all is new ;
Declining manhood wears the charm away,
And leaves us nought but cold and blank disgust.

But you, my lord Ginori, are not yet
So far advanc'd into the vale of years,
But life must still have pleasures in reserve.

GINORI.

Sir, though twice thirty winters make my spirit
Somewhat less gamesome than it was of old,
Still the recital of a virtuous deed
Fills me with joy, and I grow young again :
But I must own this cordial comes not often.

LAURENTILLA.

Nay, say not so, my lord : I trust that many
Many good deeds are every hour perform'd,
Which modest merit hides from public view.

GINORI

What, lady Laurentilla, are you there ?
My eyes are heavy, and I saw you not :
You are entitled to discourse of virtue.
Were half the ladies of the court like you,
I'd pray to Heaven for daughters.

MARGARET.

My good lord,

You are to-day most courteous: and return,
Although you heard it not, with just applause,
The panegyric of my lovely friend.

GINORI.

If Lady Laurentilla spoke of me
In terms of praise, I cannot but be pleas'd,
For I am little valued by the young.
I cannot flatter, and am much too prone
To shew my inward feelings to the world:
And as the world is daily growing worse,
My admonitions are but ill receiv'd.

LORENZINO.

Come, come, my lord, I trust it is not so.

GINORI.

Believe me, Sir, it is. Why, you yourself
Dare not avow your own good qualities;
Such are the times, that, if report be true,
You hold it scandalous to act the man:

And, though I do not think amongst your follies
That cowardice is one, you blush to follow
The rude and toilsome labour of the lists.
Your sword, I hear, is plac'd within your chamber,
And bound with roses, hangs above your couch,
To prove your hatred and contempt of arms.

LORENZINO.

True: I have twin'd my sword with flowery braids,
And have resolv'd to tempt the lists no more.
The sportful dangers of the tournament
Please me no longer—I am tir'd of these.
Yet do not think, if my dear country's cause
Requir'd my aid, my polish'd blade should rest
In ignominious sloth. 'Twould be my pride,
The chief endeavour of my life, to gain
A name for honour and for loud exploits.
But as no wars demand me in the field,
Recoiling from the pageantry of arms
I am content to wear the weeds of peace,
To court the muse, and cultivate the arts.

Farewel the buckler, and the nodding helm,
 The ponderous axe, and terror-dealing spear;
 Be mine the myrtle, not the laurel wreath,
 Love my pursuit, and beauty my reward.

GINORI.

Aye, Sir, 'tis as I said. The men engag'd
 In fond attempts to please the weaker sex,
 Forget their manhood, and are call'd polite.
 The women, idoliz'd and fed with incense,
 Till their brain turns, deride domestic cares,
 And sacrifice their all to vanity.
 Virtue is out of fashion—though perhaps
 Some few may talk of it, none practise it.

MARGARET.

Hold, hold, my lord. Make you yourself amends
 For the stray compliment you paid to one,
 By railing 'gainst all others? You indulge
 Too eagerly, methinks, your wonted anger,

LORENZINO.

It is my lord Ginori's privilege :
And therefore, fearful lest a numerous throng
Of foibles, which my conscience tells me of,
Should furnish him with larger means of censure,
I shall withdraw ere he resumes the tale.

LAURENTILLA.

My brother, I attend you. Of your highness
I take an humble leave.

SCENE IV.

GINORI. MARGARET.

GINORI.

Well, lady, you will soon
Become the mistress of this rich domain.
Though bound by all that gratitude can claim
Of faithful service to your mighty father,
Imperial Charles, yet cannot I forget
That I was born within this comely city.
Full twenty years of absence have not chas'd

The fond remembrance of my early days,
Past on the banks of Arno, from my brain ;
And still my native country, spite of all
I owe to foreign kindness, holds a place
In my warm heart. Perhaps it would be well
If Florence still retain'd its pristine freedom.
Since it *must* have a master, I rejoice
Its present ruler is a youth of hope,
And honest promise. Nor will you, I trust,
Misuse the power so soon to be your own.
Your highness is accusom'd to my ways,
And will not be offended with my speech,
When I remind you that your task is hard.

MARGARET.

My lord Ginori, I have known you long,
And from my childhood have been taught your value.
I listen to your caution with respect.

GINORI.

Allow me, lady, to say something further.
This talking Sir, this sonnet-writing lord,

Winds, as he lifts, the easy-hearted Duke.
Lacquey'd by poets, painters, and musicians,
He lives on flattery, and contemns the rough
And homely virtues of his ancestors.
He builds his reputation upon vice;
To win, and triumph in some female's love,
To crown the goblet with Falernian wine,
And quaff the nectar of the jocund grape
Till temperance be forgotten; yet to veil
The grossness of his pleasures by refin'd
And polish'd art, is his profess'd desire.
Shun, therefore, his intoxicating lures,
And guard against the witchery of his wiles.

MARGARET.

Ginori, you have past your latter life
In the chill heaviness of Austrian pomp,
And know but little of Italian ease.
The freedom of address, the mirthful grace
Of gay and elegant society,
You are unus'd to, and you like them not.

Credit me, Sir, you err in this severe
And causeless condemnation. Fare you well.
I am not angry, but I think you wrong.

GINORI.

Lady, farewell. 'Tis better I should err,
Than unadmonish'd you should lend an ear
To any tale of subtle courtlinefs.
I have perform'd my duty—for the rest,
Whatever may betide concerns me not.

*ACT II. In the Palace of LORENZINO.*LORENZINO. LAURENTILLA. [*Music ceasing.*]

LORENZINO.

HOW rich and strong the harmony of sounds

Fills the rapt ear, and presses on the mind !

Not like the melody of ancient times,

Meagre and thin. The music of our day

Is not the music of a vulgar age :

It asks a cultivated taste to feel

And estimate its beauties.

LAURENTILLA.

True, my brother :

Yet in the wildness of a simple air

There is a something touching to the heart,

Which the deep science of a master's skill

Rarely attains.

LORENZINO.

My sister, think you so ?

Sing, then, the ditty of the hapless maid,

Who fell in love with one of high descent,
And cherish'd, as she thought, a hopeless wish;
Who, when the object of her fond desire
Return'd her passion with a kindred flame,
Unable to sustain the glad surprize,
Fainted, and died.

[LAURENTILLA *sings*.

LORENZINO.

Thank you, my Laurentilla. It is sad,
Aye, very sad, is it not, Laurentilla,
To bear within that unrequited fire
Which feeds upon the heart, and never dies?

LAURENTILLA.

Why look you thus upon me, Lorenzino?
You are yourself too thoughtless for a lover;
Your vanity, besides, would never own
A passion unreturn'd.

LORENZINO.

No, no, my girl,

Believe me, I allude not to myself.
It is the licence of imperial man
To tell his amorous complaint aloud :
If he succeed, felicity is his ;
Even should he fail, at least his bitter grief
Is solac'd by confessing it. With you
It is a piteous case ; for be your truth
As pure and spotless as our Alpine snows,
Yet must it not be whisper'd to the gale
That breathes along the solitary grove,
Lest echo should repeat the tell-tale sigh,
And scorn should publish it. Beware, my sister,
In time beware of love.

LAURENTILLA.

To hide with care
Our foibles from the scrutinizing world
Is arduous : but a well-directed mind
Is ever watchful to conceal the weakness
It cannot overcome.

LORENZINO.

Most justly said :

It is not often I am thus dispos'd
To play the sage adviser. Pardon me,
If I have done amiss.——
I go to view my pictures, and shall soon
Again be with you.

[LORENZINO retires into the Picture Gallery.

LAURENTILLA sits, and plays on her Lute.

SCENE II.

LAURENTILLA. DUKE.

DUKE.

Play on, play on, and let the silver tone
Of the soft lute breathe gentleness around.

LAURENTILLA.

Your highness has surprized me. Lorenzino—

DUKE.

——Yet for a moment, lady, give me audience,
My visit is to you.

LAURENTILLA.

To me, my lord!

I wait your high command.

DUKE.

Laurentilla,

Pray do not chill me with this cold address.

In early childhood we were oft together.

Your brother, whose esteem is still my boast,

Was the belov'd companion of my youth :

My claims of intimate regard from him

Gave me admittance to your lovely self,

And ere I knew I had a heart to offer,

I found myself devoted to your sway.

In the rash eagerness of heedless passion

Some tokens of attachment past between us—

LAURENTILLA.

True, Sir : and I indeed am much to blame

Thus long to have detain'd them. They were once

Most dear to me : for then I had not learn'd

How few amongst the great ones of the earth

Are masters of their actions. I have since
Taught my aspiring heart a juster lesson.
Forgive me, if the memory of past scenes,
Thus suddenly recall'd, has somewhat mov'd me
Beyond my usual bearing. Take, my lord,
Take back the pledges of your thoughtless love,
And suffer me to breathe an earnest prayer
That joys and ceaseless blessings may be yours!

DUKE.

Oh, if a single tear be shed for me,
I am more favour'd than I dar'd to hope.
Believe me, Laurentilla, I am come
Not to increase but to dispel the cloud
Of heavy sorrow that o'ercasts your brow.
In duty to a father whom I lov'd
I have been long compell'd to act a part
Ill suited to my feelings. I *did* fear,
Some other youth, more fortunate, possess'd
The heart which hard necessity alone
Had forc'd me to relinquish. But if still,

If still I am belov'd by her, whose smile
Was the sweet solace of my early life,
Behold me eager to fulfil the vows
I made to her of old.

LAURENTILLA.

Most honour'd Sir,
To say I feel not this exalted goodness
Would be injurious to us both. Ah, no!
I feel much more than I have words to tell.
But I should ill repay your generous conduct
Were I not firmly to reject your offer.
That which in you 'tis nobleness to give,
In me it would be baseness to receive.
Think not, my lord, because in childish sport
Or the light carelessness of sprightly youth,
You fondly noted me above my fellows,
Through groundless vanity I deem'd you bound
In any serious compact. No, my lord,
I knew too well the gallantry of courts,
And therefore thought that to return your gifts

Was but of little moment. Since to day
An opportunity occurs unfought,
Again, Sir, I entreat, take back your presents,
And with them take my thanks.

DUKE.

O never, never !
Now by the tear that adds so new a charm
To the mild lustre of thy speaking eye,
I would not part again with this lov'd hand
For all that power or riches can bestow.
Heaven be my witness, who has heard my prayer,
That not to be the arbiter of kings,
Though much ambition moves me, not for gold,
Though gold oft buys importance, did I pray :
Freedom of choice, and home felicity,
These were the theme of all my daily thoughts,
These the dear visions of my nightly dreams.
And if my gentle mistress frown not on me,
These will be mine. Ah, trifle not, my love,
Let not a false fantastic sense of honour

Tempt you to throw our happiness away,
But if an interest in thy breast be mine,
Bless, bless my suit with a benignant smile.

LAURENTILLA.

My lord, I fain would be severely wise,
Fain would refuse what most my heart desires :
Alas, I feel myself a very woman,
With all the weakness of my sex's nature.
My truant tongue denies me power to utter
What reason bids, and I am wholly lost.
Yet I foresee a thousand thousand crosses
To thwart your kind intent. This Austrian lady—

DUKE.

Were you unknown, should never be my wife.
Me her imperious dignity of manner,
The high unbending temper of her mind,
And the tempestuous fervor of her spirit
Rather alarm than win : me other charms
Attract with other influence ; artless ease

The magic grace of meek timidity,
And worth, unconscious of her own desert.

LAURENTILLA.

Is not the very spirit you condemn,
Much to be fear'd if treated with neglect?

DUKE.

That be my care. The Princess loves me not,
Nay, with a partial eye, unless I err,
Regards your brother. He shall bear my message,
And, that he well may play the orator,
Shall not be told to whom my hand is pledg'd.
Be secret for a while, my gentle love,
And all shall yet be fair.

LAURENTILLA.

My brother comes :
Permit me to retire ; lest my full heart
Betray emotions I should wish to hide.

SCENE. III.

DUKE. LORENZINO.

LORENZINO.

Hail to the Duke. May every morn, like this,
Add to his high renown!

DUKE.

Renown, my friend,
Is the rich fruit of honourable toil;
The recompence of virtue tried and firm;
Not to be gain'd by lucky negligence,
Which oft assumes the outward stamp of good,
When all within is hollowness. Renown,
Mere every-day renown, unearn'd by merit,
Galls and offends the man of solid worth.

LORENZINO.

You moralize, my lord.

DUKE.

It hurts me much
To be o'erwhelm'd with lavish praise for that,
Which in another would have pass'd observ'd

With petty approbation. I am tir'd,
Am wearied with the canting tribe of fools,
Who have assail'd me with such boundless plaudits,
That he who heard, might swear there could be found
In the wide world no intellect but mine.

LORENZINO.

My error is not of this kind, my lord,
I should be rather thought to say too little.

DUKE.

You, Lorenzino, are of other sort
Than these I speak-of. For your praise, I thank you,
Since I believe it honest and sincere.
To prove I deem it so, my inmost heart
Shall be unfolded to you. Lorenzino,
This Austrian alliance I detest.

LORENZINO.

I must confess the matrimonial yoke
Is but ill fitted to the neck of youth
Exulting wildly in the May of life,
And spurning the restraint of grave discretion;

Yet, when occasion serves, it may be worn.
 Such are the pliant manners of the day;
 That he who bears the burthen oft may slip
 The galling load, and be receiv'd with smiles
 In the forgiving and indulgent world.

DUKE.

Trust me, my friend, you wrong me much in this.
 'Tis not the levity of untam'd youth,
 But reason's self bids me decline this marriage.
 The Princess has no claims upon my love,
 And I am fix'd not to bestow my hand
 On one my heart approves not. Be you, therefore,
 (I am myself ill-suited to the task,
 And little skill'd to read the mind of woman)
 Be you the bearer of my firm resolve.

LORENZINO.

It is a perilous task indeed, my lord,
 To bear the tidings of her own rejection.

DUKE.

Nay, tell the tale in your own phrase, my friend,

And word it as you will. I should be loth
In aught to injure this illustrious dame ;
But never will I sacrifice my peace
A victim to her vanity.

LORENZINO.

Have you consider'd this important step ;
Know you the fury of a woman scorn'd ?
Have you well weigh'd your interest in the state
With the proud influence of her father Charles ?

DUKE.

I am most firm. If it be possible,
Let the refusal rather come from her ;
If not, I stand the hazard of the cast.

[ATTENDANT, *without*.

My lord, the Princess Margaret.

DUKE.

It is a meeting I most wish to shun.
Remember that my fate is in your hands.

SCENE IV.

MARGARET. LORENZINO. I am so f

MARGARET.

Busied in meditation, Lorenzino?

What mighty cause, what magic has enthralld

The roving wildness of thy playful mind?

Is it some nymph, light-hearted, that has wrought

This wondrous change and bound thee in her spell;

Or art thou holding converse with the Muse,

Rapt in poetic trance and swelling high,

Heedless of baser matter?

LORENZINO.

He, who deems

That, which appears before me, baser matter,

Must be alike in intellect and sight

Heavily dull.

MARGARET.

Of dear seducing flattery,

Even they who know the falsehood, feel the charm.

Though I am well assured thy ready tongue

Had said the same to any of my sex,
Yet am I pleas'd to hear the sound of praise,
However void of meaning. Truth is harsh
And frequently unwelcome ; soft deceit
Pleasant and sweet.

LORENZINO.

It happens oft, that they,
Who in the currency of common fame
Pass for most shameless flatterers, are not such.
No man is found so permanent in good,
Or fix'd in ill, but sometimes he must stray
Wide from the usual tenour of his course.
Him, whom to day I honour and esteem,
To-morrow I with justice may condemn :
He whom to day I blame, by some good deed
May win my love to-morrow. Yet the world,
Should I proclaim the dictates of my heart,
Commend or censure as I really think,
And speak the truth, would call me flatterer,
Would deem me inconsistent in my speech,

Nor to be heard nor trusted. Dear, dear lady,
Learn, and betimes, to scorn the world's report.

MARGARET.

What, Lorenzino, do *you* counsel thus?
You, whose chief passion is the love of fame!
You, who are pointed at for having knelt
Before the shrine of popular applause
With worship most idolatrous, do you
Affect to mock, what you have toil'd to gain?

LORENZINO.

All are inclin'd to blame, but few to praise.
Praise is extorted by our own deserts,
And we have ground for triumph; whilst reproach
Is oft bestow'd where it is least deserv'd,
And ought to pass unheeded. Once again,
Dear lady, scorn the censure of the world.

MARGARET.

Wherefore, my lord, is this address'd to me?
Am I so prone to think as custom bids,
So much the slave of words, that I should make

My thought subservient to the faucy breath
Of dream-repeating rumour? Trust me, Sir,
Though honour be the jewel of my soul,
And priz'd above all value, yet secure
In honest confidence, I dare despise
The folly which assails me.

LORENZINO.

Hold this strain,
And you indeed are great above your sex.
'Tis not the form majestic, the arch'd brow,
Where dignity and wisdom sit enthron'd,
Nor the quick wit which pierces through the veil
Of others' minds, and reads the secret truth,
That can ensure the candour of mankind.
Some little circumstance, some petty slight
Shown to us by another, by ourselves
Perhaps unmerited, becomes the source
Of idlest tales, and strange absurdities.

MARGARET.

And what may be this fable, this wild story,

(For I perceive your speech relates to me)
Which is to rob me of my wonted peace,
And seems to you thus fearful in the telling?

LORENZINO.

Nay, nay, 'tis but a trifle—that one man
Sees with an eye unmov'd, what others view
With eager gaze, and rapturous admiration.
That he, to whom is pledg'd the hand of her
Whose smile the youths of Florence strive to win
With emulous exertion, constant toil,
Cold and unconscious of his happy fortune
Knows not the worth——

MARGARET.

Stay, Lorenzino, stay.
This is no fable, Sir, nor did I need
To be admonish'd of the Duke's neglect.
But you, bred up in courts, must know that love
Seldom prefides at princely marriages.
'Tis policy alone unites the great,

And the poor victims are content to hope
For dead tranquillity, not ardent passion.

LORENZINO.

Set, then, a brave example, honour'd lady :
Refuse to be the slave of others wishes,
Scorn this alliance, and reject the Prince.

MARGARET.

Sir, I descry the tendency of this.
You would not thus advise me, if the Prince
Were not appriz'd of your design. Enough,
I am prepar'd—speak out, my lord, and spare not.
Tell my dismissal in the Duke's own words ;
What says the Duke to Austria ? Austria waits,
To hear his high resolve. But if we err not,
Florence shall rue the folly of her lord.

LORENZINO.

Your highness much mistakes, if——

MARGARET.

Lorenzino,

Trifle not. Add not mockery to the list

Of injuries, which 'tis my fate to bear.

Upon your honour, means the Duke to wed?

I thank you, Sir. Your silence is sufficient.

Tell the proud youth——But I am loth to wage

A war of words——say, therefore, nought but this——

Within a few short hours we quit this city.

Ere our departure, Sir, we yet may crave

An audience from you.

LORENZINO.

I attend you, glad

To serve you ; most unwilling to do aught

That for a moment may disturb your ease.

ACT III. SCENE I. In the Palace of MARGARET.

GINORI. DUKE.

DUKE.

THE Princess deigns not then to see me ?

GINORI.

Sir,

You have already heard her stern denial,
Nor know I aught of good that can result
From the request you make. You have refus'd
A lady of a high and fiery nature,
Used to command, ill fitted to sustain
A disappointed hope : and, truth to say,
If she should prove resentful of the wrong,
I cannot blame her anger.

DUKE.

Lord Ginori,

Long ere my father press'd this union on me,
Long ere I saw the Princess, or I knew
The splendid talents of her active mind,

My heart in rash defiance of control
Had own'd another, mistress of its fate.
To her was due my faith, to her my love.
Conscious of this engagement, not a word,
More than the forms of courtesy required,
Of just observance to the rank and sex
Of your illustrious charge, has once escap'd
My cautious lip. For I conceiv'd it base
To nourish expectations, when assur'd
They could not be fulfill'd. When next you meet,
Inform the lady Margaret that I grieve
To be reduc'd to this: that 'tis my wish
She would herself withdraw her proffer'd hand,
And grace some other of superior worth,
With that which fate compels me to resign.

GINORI.

Sir, I believe you have an honest tongue,
And mean not to deceive. But you are young,
And have the rashness of an uncurb'd spirit.
As for myself, I love you not the less

For this imprudent passion. The cold world
 Will much condemn you for it. Love, pure love,
 The cherish'd sentiment of innocent youth
 In days of old, is exil'd from the heart,
 And interest alone is paramount.
 However, Sir, I neither have the right
 Nor will to chide. I shall obey your orders,
 And will explain your purpose to the Princess.

DUKE.

And, dear Ginori, tell my artless tale
 With your accustom'd energy. You plead
 The cause of truth, and cannot but succeed.
 Peace is your message: peaceful be the event.

SCENE II.

GINORI. MARGARET.

GINORI.

My much respected mistress, you are come
 Convenient to my wish. How is it, lady?
 Your servant is most eager to befriend you.

MARGARET.

And at no time, Ginori, did I need
Your friendship more. You must already know
(For malice is most swift to tell the story
Of her poor neighbour's shame) you needs must know
That I stand here a vile, dishonour'd wretch ;
That he for whom I left my father's court,
For whom I came, oh, foolishness of haste !
In the broad eye of day to this curst city,
Mocks my pure fame, and sends me back in scorn !

GINORI.

Though I have found you in your temper warm,
And fierce beyond the temp'rate rules of prudence,
Yet in the very tempest of your wrath
You oft have lent an ear to reason's voice.
Then do not think me sluggish in your cause,
If I attempt to mitigate your ire.
I must acknowledge that the Duke has err'd :
But if you deem yourself disgrac'd, you err
Still more than he has done. Disgrac'd ! in what ?

The virtuous breast, content with self-applause,
Heeds not the popular talk, be what it may.
Few ears have heard the tale which galls you thus ;
It still remains a secret from the croud :
And should you not yourself divulge the story,
May long continue secret. The young Duke
Entreats you to reject his suit—

MARGARET.

Ginori,

Is this your zeal, is this your boasted friendship ?
Thus, dervise-like, to preach tame patience to me ?
Art thou indeed so little vers'd in courts
To hope the affairs of princes *can* be secret ?
The Duke entreats me to reject his suit !
I am much bound to his insulting goodness,
And am to trust, then, to his kind forbearance !
Yes—let me follow this inglorious counsel,
Let me be made the theme of public talk,
And furnish laughter for the dames of Florence.
Let me become the abject thing you wish me.

Contempt is of a strange contagious nature,
 And quickly will extend from me to you.
 The finger of derision soon shall point
 At the cold guardian of an injur'd woman,
 Who, when his duty call'd him to avenge her,
 Calmly prescrib'd submission.

GINORI.

By my foul,
 A soldier's soul, I love you as my daughter,
 And would do all, that honour and good faith
 Permit, to serve you, lady. I am rude,
 And little skill'd in the soft phrase of speech;
 But I am milder than men think of me.

MARGARET.

Aye, mild, it seems, indeed! mild even to fear.

GINORI.

This undeserv'd reproach affects me not.
 I dare do any thing that virtue bids;
 But to divide two guileless hearts, conjoin'd
 In early love, I am indeed unable.

The Prince has own'd, that ere he saw your highness
He was betroth'd in secret to another.

MARGARET.

Weds he another ! Torture and revenge !
Is't not enough he sends me back refus'd,
But must another triumph in my shame ?

GINORI.

Why how now, lady ! What new storm is this ?
Surely you lov'd him not.

MARGARET.

Lov'd ! I despis'd him !
But after this, contempt is at an end.
A stronger passion now possesses me,
And from this hour I'll hunt him to the death.
Prepare, my lord, I shall away to-night.
In mine my father's dignity is wrong'd.
I will assail him with my warmest prayers,
And cast myself before him in the dust :
I will not suffer him to rest a day
Till he has promis'd to assert my rights,

And raze this tow'ring city to the ground.
 Her gorgeous palaces shall feed the fire,
 And blaze, one altar, to my full revenge !

GINORI.

Ah ! well may men abhor despotic power,
 When at the bidding of a woman's tongue
 An unoffending people may be doom'd,
 Thus easily, to the sword ! Great God of heaven !
 How long shall man cease to be man ! How long
 Shall he continue thus to brutalize
 And bend his front sublime beneath the yoke
 Of his clay-born coequal ! Lady, lady,
 You know not what you say. My countrymen
 Have never done you injury. Beware,
 How you involve them in their lord's offence.
 If after this there be another world,
 (And that there is each bosom seems to feel)
 Severe will be the punishment of him,
 Who, from some petty pique, some vain caprice,
 Lets slip the dogs of havock on mankind.

Even here on earth posterity shall damn
The wretch's memory to immortal shame.

MARGARET.

Preach not, my lord, but answer to my words.
You love your country, wish your country well?

GINORI.

For its belov'd advantage were there need
To lay down this old life, my life were nothing.

MARGARET.

You know, Ginori, my imperial fire
Holds me most dear. He will not hear my cry,
He will not suffer my complaint, unmov'd.
To shield your native city from the sword
One way is yet remaining—

GINORI.

Name it, name it.

MARGARET.

You wear a dagger, Sir. The Duke must die!

GINORI.

Bear I the stamp of murderer on my brow,

That you address me thus assassin-like ?
In silence did I hearken to a sound
Which shook my very soul. Now list to me.
Florence was once the seat of liberty ;
Nor is the spirit of freedom quite extinct.
Oft have her patriot sons (some few remain
In spite of hard calamity) adjur'd me
By the proud courage of my dead forefathers,
To aid them in their hazardous attempt
To drive our upstart rulers from the throne.
The youthful virtues of our present lord
Promis'd, and promise now, a gentle reign.
So cold was the complexion of the times,
And such the love of servitude amongst us,
That it appear'd far better to submit,
Content with little evils, than to risk
Incurring greater for contingent good.
Such were my thoughts, when I resisted, firm,
The strong entreaties of my valiant friends.
Heaven be my witness, I regard you still :

But never will I gratify your hate
By that foul deed, which I refus'd to do
Even for the dear sake of my natal soil.

MARGARET.

Then have we talk'd enough. Prepare you, Sir,
I shall away before to-morrow's dawn.

GINORI.

Your highness bids me, and I take my leave,
Wishing you to attain a lowlier mind.

SCENE III.

MARGARET. LORENZINO.

MARGARET.

Who waits there. Go you to the lord Lorenzo—

LORENZINO.

He answers for himself. Behold him here.

MARGARET.

Before we quit your city, Sir, accept
Our thanks for all the lightly-passing hours,
We have experienc'd in this fair domain.

That we leave something to regret in Florence
We owe to you alone.

LORENZINO.

Your highness rates
My humble services above their worth.

MARGARET.

I flatter not, nor am I in the mood
To speak in accents foreign to my feelings.
When I am gone, I still shall bear engraven
Deep in my memory your benign endeavours
To entertain the fallen Margaret.

LORENZINO.

Dear lady, talk not thus——

MARGARET.

To please you, Sir,
I will assume a different tone. The song,
The dance, the festival, the theatre,
Shall be the subject of my gay discourse.
I will recall to mind the mirthful scenes,
Chaften'd by taste, which have amus'd me here,

And strive in the remembrance of past joys
 To bury present grief. The sculptur'd stone,
 Which seems almost to breathe, the pictur'd halls,
 The musical assemblies, the cool vale
 Of Arno, crown'd with olives——

LORENZINO.

The brave lifts,
 Where sat the royal Margaret, the fair judge
 And wonder of the plain——

MARGARET.

The tournament !

It is a mockery which I most detest,
 For it reminds me of illustrious times,
 Gone never to return. It pains me much
 To see the *forms* of chivalry remain,
 And the true spirit of the order fled.
 Then, if an injur'd woman sought assistance,
 She found a guardian in each valorous knight.
 Had I been born in those advent'rous days,

I should not mourn my sufferings unreveng'd,
Nor want a champion to redress my wrongs.

LORENZINO.

Were I not bound by more than common ties
To him whose conduct has arous'd you thus,
I should be proud to shew to all the world,
That he, who injur'd beauty, injur'd me.
To be the warrior of the gentler sex,
The sworn protector of insulted rank,
Would be the boast and glory of my heart,
Well purchas'd by the loss of life itself.

MARGARET.

You word it bravely. 'Tis the frequent trick
Of those who little mean, to talk the more;
Deeds prove the man, not words. But I am wrong
To deem this idle courtesy of speech
Bears any earnest import. Yet, methinks,
Were Lorenzino serious in his offers,
We are of power to recompense his aid.
Is he ambitious? She who stands before him,

The daughter of the kingdom-shaking Charles,
 Can much exalt him in the road to greatness,
 Is he desirous of an endless name?
 And to be rumour'd in the mouths of men,
 Will bravely vindicate his country's rights,
 And free his native city from the yoke
 Of an usurping and tyrannic sway?
 Margaret's great father can enforce th' attempt,
 And bid the free state still continue free.

LORENZINO.

What is it you would have me do? My life
 I should account a trifle: but to lift
 My angry sword against my patron's breast
 Exceeds my firmness.

MARGARET.

Impotence of heart!
 Shameless confession of a groveling soul!
 It seems, then, Lorenzino needs a patron
 To draw his talents into public view?
 Kindly to stamp him worthy of applause,

And smile him into notice? My good lord,
This is indeed most pitiful. This strange
And frank humility I look'd not for.
I thought to find you in your errors great,
And though deserving blame, above contempt.

LORENZINO.

Lady, I did not mean—

MARGARET.

'Tis whisper'd, Sir,
Your youthful patron is not well at ease;
The boy is love-sick, and prepares to wed
Some damsel of the court.

LORENZINO.

Your highness errs;
The Prince is most averse—

MARGARET,

'Tis you that err.
I fear your master has withdrawn his former
Unbounded confidence—for, on my honour,
I have it from himself, he means to wed.

The chosen object of his fix'd regard,
 Doubtless, has friends and brothers, who may wish
 To win the gracious ear of sov'reignty.
 Will it be pleasant, think you, to descend
 From the high station you possess in Florence,
 To flatter these new fav'rites of the Duke,
 And bow to those whom now perhaps you scorn?
 I speak not thus to irritate. The wrongs
 Of Margaret cannot want a champion long.
 Some other hand will readily be found,
 More prompt, to wipe away the foul disgrace
 Which hangs upon my fame.

LORENZINO.

Not one—not one.

The Duke shall meet me in the field to-morrow;
 Nor shall the combat end before the death
 Of one or both of us.

MARGARET.

My gallant friend!

There blaz'd the spirit of your ancestors!

Why, worthy Prince, your countrymen shall bow
 In trembling awe to your superior genius!
 You shall surpass in wide-extended fame
 Lorenzo the Magnificent himself,
 Patron of arts, and arbiter of states!
 But is there not some surer way than this?
 Though well I know the vigour of your arm,
 Yet is the fortune of the field uncertain.
 The Roman Brutus, when he stabb'd his friend,
 The mighty Cæsar, for his country's sake,
 Made use of other weapons than the sword,
 And with his dagger drank the tyrant's blood.
 Were it not better far to give the death
 Beneath the sable cover of the night?

LORENZINO.

Lady, the world will hold it base to strike——

MARGARET. M

Need the world know it, Sir? The secret rests
 With one, who will be silent as the grave,
 Where ere to-morrow's dawn the Duke must sleep.

I must confess this is no common act.
It asks the firmness of no vulgar hand,
And therefore, Sir, I have selected you.
We have already promis'd high rewards,
To these, too, we will add our heart and faith ;
And Margaret shall recompense the deed
By giving you herself.

LORENZINO.

It is enough.

Were it to wander o'er our Alpine heights,
And pluck, unarm'd, the gaunt wolf by the beard ;
To stem the torrent of the burning mount,
Which pours its fiery deluge o'er our plains ;
Or to perform some strange and nameless deed,
At such a price I dare do any thing.
Within an hour your foe shall be no more.

MARGARET.

That's my brave lord. Farewell—remember me ;
And when you strike, say Margaret guides the blow !

ACT IV. Scene in the Ducal Palace.

GINORI. DUKE.

DUKE.

GREET not my marriage-eve with sounds like these.

This night I dedicate to love, and claim

A respite from the toil of worldly cares.

Safe in the faith of my true countrymen;

I hazard little by to-day's event.

GINORI.

Your highness then is steady in your purpose?

DUKE.

Were it a worthy motive to desist

Through fear, Ginori? Your impetuous mistress

Might well condemn me, were I so to act.

But, my good lord, I have already said

That 'tis no time for words; the deed is done.

GINORI.

Then never, never may you wish undone

The fortune of to-night! Yet pardon me,

For at my age man sees with other eyes
 Than in the May-time of his lustihood;
 Pray pardon me, if I again condemn
 This violent haste, if I again repeat,
 That ere the morn the Princess leaves your city,
 And that her ire is of a fatal kind.

DUKE.

We thank you, Sir, we thank you for your counsel,
 Though 'tis not in our power to follow it.
 We shall anon dispatch an embassy
 To state our misdeeds to the emperor Charles.
 For you, my lord, we bear you in our mind,
 And hold you, Sir, most worthy—so farewell.

SCENE II.

DUKE goes out. GINORI on the opposite side meets

LORENZINO.

LORENZINO.

Either these tapers strike upon my sight
 With more than usual lustre, or this act
 So fully occupies my mind within,

That objects from without affect it not, I hadt wot
 Or leave uncertain vestiges behind.
 I scarcely see before me, and the light
 Dances fantastic measures in the air,
 Mocking me as I pass.

GINORI.

Lord Lorenzino!
 What brings you hither at so late an hour?
 But I forgot, you are an inmate here,
 Within these walls you are a second master;
 And these good doors almost at any time
 Are open to receive their other lord.
 Good night.

LORENZINO.

Good night, my lord. Good night!
 If good night be to wish me rest, the wish
 Will not, I fear, avail me much. For rest
 I shall to-night have none. These hours must pass
 In action, not in sleep. No sleep to-night.
 Said I to-night? Suppose this deed were done,

How shall I sleep to-morrow? Lord Ginori,
 Methinks it was who past me. Said he not
 I was an inmate here? 'Tis true, I am.
 Is it not most inhospitable then
 To violate the roof which gives me shelter,
 By robbing its poor master of his life?
 This is a train of thought I dare not follow.
 Would I could shake off this oppression here.
 Wine, which is wont to raise the heart of man,
 Has sunk my spirit lower than it was.
 I must recal some image to my mind
 Of triumph and of hope (for to recede,
 And bear the bitter ridicule which waits
 On a relinquish'd purpose, is beyond
 The daring of my nature). If success
 Crown my bold enterprize, this night indeed
 Shall be accounted good; shall be enroll'd,
 And, aye, remember'd in the calendar.
 These portals, which behold me an inferior,
 Attentive waiting on his sov'reign's nod,

Henceforward shall receive no other lord,
Shall own no other master than myself.
This shall endow me with supreme dominion !

[*Drawing his dagger.*]

One effort, and 'tis over. Yon apartment
Contains my victim. He sits thoughtfully.
Now, Princess, I avenge you.

DUKE, *within.*

Hold, assassin,
Hold thy vile hand. Alas, I bleed ! I bleed !

SCENE III.

LAURENTILLA *veiled.* LORENZINO.

LAURENTILLA.

Remember, dear Bianchi, my directions.
Early to-morrow, mind you : for to-night
This is enough. I will not task you further.

LORENZINO.

The struggle's at an end. I must have air,
For I am faint to sickness.

LAURENTILLA.

Sir, my lord !

LORENZINO.

Did I not hear a noise? methought I did.
Had he not turn'd so suddenly upon me,
I surely should have spar'd him. Sick, sick, sick.

LAURENTILLA *advances.*

My lord, my honour'd lord. My God, my brother!

LORENZINO.

My sister, and at night, and in this chamber!
Why then there is a Providence above:
And I, though all-unknowing, have been made
An instrument of Heaven to wound the guilty.
Thou silly girl, thy paramour is gone
To answer for the spoiling of thine honour.

LAURENTILLA.

Wherefore is this? Come forth, my lord, come
forth
And save me from the slanderer's tongue, come forth
My lord, my love, my husband!

LORENZINO.

Husband! Husband!

LAURENTILLA.

Brother, you judge of others most unkindly,
And know but little of your sister's heart.
Had not the Duke been honourably mine,
Think you, you would have found me here? Unhand
me—

Concealment I have done with. I am proud
To tell to all the world my worthy choice.

LORENZINO.

You must not pass.

LAURENTILLA.

Ah me, what groan is there!

Away, Sir, let me go. I'll not be held.

Away—— [*breaks from him.*]

LORENZINO.

Her husband! True. I heard it well. Her husband!
Now is the measure of my guilt most full,
And shame, and misery is my future lot.
Whither shall I betake me? how shut out
The cry of murder from the ears of men?

LAURENTILLA *returning.*

Come hither, Lorenzino. Come you hither.

He is not dead, my brother. Still he lives,
And prays you to accept his dying pardon.

LORENZINO.

Points he at me, then, as his murderer?

LAURENTILLA.

And are you not? My brother, I have pledg'd
My solemn promise to conceal your crime;
And, though my heart burst, I will keep my word.
From me, Sir, you are safe. Now follow me.

LORENZINO.

What, visit him again! see him again!

O never, never.

LAURENTILLA.

'Tis his last request:

He has done much for you. And fear you, Sir,
To see him living? What will be your fear
To meet him in a life to come?

[DUKE groans. LAURENTILLA retires.]

LORENZINO.

Away!

I'm rivetted to earth, and cannot stir.

My jointless knees deny me their support.

O God! if this fell deed were but undone,

What would I not sustain!

'Tis he! Stand off.

Approach me not. I dare not look on you.

SCÈNE IV.

DUKE, *supported by* LAURENTILLA. LORENZINO.

DUKE.

Speak not aloud, lest you betray yourself.

Why, Lorenzino, you have used me thus,

I am unable to assign a cause.

Whatever impulse urg'd you to the deed,

Trust me, my friend, I never meant you wrong.

That I conceal'd our marriage, I lament:

Yet was my motive a most honest one.

To leave you unconfin'd by selfish views,

Safe from the malice of a slanderous world,
And even in supposition free from blame,
Was my sole aim. I had, indeed, good hope
To find you a successful advocate :
The lady Margaret——

LORENZINO.

Talk not, talk not of her,
It is the demon whose destructive arts
Have lur'd me into blood.

DUKE.

Did Margaret this ?

Well, peace be with her ; and may all my sins
So be forgiven me, as I forgive
The injuries done by others ! Laurentilla,
Had longer life been granted me, methinks,
I should have better merited the faith,
Which, but a few hours since, you pledg'd to me.
And yet, however else I may have err'd,
Surely my love deserv'd a happier lot.
Our's is a sad, sad wedding night, my girl.

I feel myself grow very very faint,
And the last breath seems trembling at my heart.
Soon shall I cease to be. My Lorenzino,
Give me your hand, and let us part in friendship.

LORENZINO.

My injur'd lord, my murder'd, murder'd master!

DUKE.

Remember, sweet, the promise which you made me.
In all that bears relation to my death,
Follow your brother's counsel. Let no word
Escape, no carelessness denote—farewel—remember—
[Dies.]

LAURENTILLA.

Well, Sir, what course pursue you? what device
Has Lorenzino fram'd to shun the fate,
Which waits attendant on the steps of guilt?
I have wound up my spirit to the effort,
And will not heave a sigh. You womanish tears,
Get you far hence! My portion is to bear
With patient fortitude the woes of life,

And I submit in silence. Mean you, Sir,
To save yourself by flight? The night rides fast,
To-morrow will disclose this scene of blood,
And flight may then be vain.

LORENZINO.

I hear you, girl,
But will not shun my sentence. Death for death,
Blood shall be paid for blood. I will not live
To be an outcast from the haunts of men.
The officers of justice are at hand,
To them will I resign this hateful form,
And end my race of slaughter.

LAURENTILLA.

Have you then
Sufficient energy to die, expos'd
To the rude taunting of the popular throng?
You, who are us'd to nought but songs of praise,
Will ill sustain an ignominious doom.
My mother bore you, guilty as you are,
Nor could I view, unmov'd, my brother fall

By the base hand——Dear mother of my youth,
Thou hast escap'd these horrors. Would the tomb
Had clos'd for ever on my early days,
Ere I had seen this fight! Weak that I am,
This is no time for impotent complaint!
Begone, my brother, get you hence with speed.
If it be sinful to conceal thy crime,
I cannot help it. I have pledg'd my word,
And thou art still my brother. Heaven forgive me!
If I be wrong, in sooth I cannot help it.
Secluded from the vanities of life,
The peace of penitence may still be thine.
Therefore away, my brother, and be gone!

LORENZINO.

Why then I *will* be gone. But ere I go
Will I away to Margaret. In her ear
Must I relate this horrible tale. My words
Shall break the stubborn temper of her soul,
And fill her with repentance like my own.
One interview, and I am gone for ever.

LAURENTILLA.

There is a safe and secret passage yonder,
Whence we may pass unnotic'd. I forgot,
Your knowledge is of elder date than mine;
Within the palace you had boundless sway,
And were in all entrusted by my lord.
Said I, my lord? I meant not to reproach you.
My lord, my husband! These are terms that were:
Alas! I have no right to use them now!
One kiss, and thus I tear myself away.
Departed spirit of my well-belov'd!
If I have seem'd too patient of thy loss,
Think that thine own injunction made me so,
And view me with the sorrow angels feel,
When they look down on frail humanity!

ACT V.

SCENE I. *In the Palace of MARGARET.*

MARGARET. LORENZINO.

MARGARET.

PROUD city, fare thee well ! The morning sun
Tinges with gold thy palace-gracing spires.
Proud city, fare thee well ! Thy youthful sov'reign
Ere this has fall'n the victim of my wrath.
I came to be thy mistress. I depart
Unwedded, it is true : but not dishonour'd.
The same report which tells of my disgrace,
Shall bear the tidings of my high revenge.
Speak, Lorenzino, speak, and quickly, too,
For I am most impatient——

LORENZINO.

Hangs the tear

In thy eye, lady ; quivers thus thy lip,
And falter thus the accents of thy tongue,

Left the completion of our dark intent
Should have made vain thy wishes and thy tears?

MARGARET.

What, you have fail'd then! Curses on the folly
That led me to entrust you! Shame on shame!

LORENZINO.

Fail'd, say you, fail'd! I would to Heaven I had!
Oh, did I find you forrowing for the deed,
I should be willing to repress the tale,
And spare your ear the horrors of the story.
Proud and obdurate! hear me.—In his chamber,
Spoil'd of the fair delights of life and light,
Struck by this arm, and weltering in his gore,
Lies the late master of this palmy state.

MARGARET.

Why this is well. I wish it to be thus.
Am I a child, to say and to unsay?
This hour to glow with anger, and the next
Aw'd by the grandeur of my own success

To pour forth tones of clamorous regret ?
I say again, 'tis well, I wish it thus.

LORENZINO.

You know not yet the fullness of our crime,
It is the misery of those who err,
Not to perceive the dangers which they risk.
Break of the social chain a single ring,
And the convulsive effort mars the whole ;
Shivers to pieces each adjoining link,
And far extends beyond the breaker's purpose.
My sister, my poor blameless Laurentilla—
The tempest we design'd for one alone,
Has wreck'd her hopes of happiness for ever.
Last night, last fatal night, the Duke, that was,
Hail'd her his gentle bride. I cut the knot,
And left the virgin-wife a prey to woe.
Even in the rapture of the nuptial hour,
While her young blood thrill'd jocund in each vein,
I dash'd the cup of pleasure from her lip,

Gave her to drink the bitterness of gall,
And steep'd in sorrow her remaining years.

MARGARET.

Poor Laurentilla, I lament her fortune,
For I believe, indeed, she lov'd him well.
But if we must be guilty (I comply
With your own weakness, when I use the term)
Wherefore our error is enhanc'd by this
In truth I know not. Surely 'tis the intent,
Not the bare act, for which we give account,
When we retrace the windings of our minds?
If in the strife to save me from the waves,
I seize some friendly fragment of the wreck,
Am I to blame, because the plank, withdrawn,
Leaves others to the mercy of the seas?
That which we mean not, we are guiltless of.

LORENZINO.

Self-preservation is the general law
Impos'd on man. But it is vain to urge
A plea like this.

MARGARET.

Disgrace and death are one.

So Margaret thought, and to preserve herself,
She wash'd away the memory of her shame
In the life-current of the man who wrong'd her.
But let me ask, my lord, was I alone
The cause of this, did nothing else excite
Your slumbering spirit to this bold attempt?

LORENZINO.

What other cause, what motive *could* there be?
For me, I had no anger 'gainst the Duke.

MARGARET.

Why, Lorenzino, I expected this:
For, trust me, Sir, I read your nature right.
But 'tis not well, nor is it manly, Sir,
Idly to play this mind-enfeebling part,
And shrink from self-discussion. Hear me, lord.
When the Duke's silence led you to suppose
Some stranger-damsel favour'd with his love,
With pol'tic jealousy you weigh'd your fortune,

Beheld, alarm'd, the chances of your fall,
And gladly join'd me in my just revenge.
Now, since events have prov'd the balance false,
You mourn the hasty fervor of your zeal,
And would recal your aid. Blush, blush, my lord.
This littleness of heart becomes you not.

LORENZINO.

What fatal witchery is this? By Heaven,
Spite of myself, she awes me into silence.

MARGARET.

'Tis the dominion a superior spirit
Possesses o'er a weaker. You, my lord,
Are willing to be great, but will not use
The means to make you so. Is this the man,
The wondrous man, whose comprehensive soul
Seem'd to demand the tribute of applause
From each admiring ear, each raptur'd tongue?
Rouse, Lorenzino, rouse, lest you become
A mere book-hero, eloquent in words,
And skilful in the labours of the pen,

But in the nobler bravery of deeds
A very boy, untried and uninformed,
Waste not the time in vacant talk—if life
Be worth preserving, or the hope of power
Stir aught of former courage in thy breast,
Haste to the public market-place, convene
The citizens—proclaim aloud, that he,
Who late usurp'd uncurb'd controlment o'er them,
Is fall'n. The world is easily deceiv'd:
Be confident, and half the work is done.
Rush through the streets, the poignard in your hand,
And tell the throng that tyranny is o'er,
Tell them, that patriot-like, for them alone
You have contemn'd the feeble claims of friendship,
And have struck deep for freedom and your country.

LORENZINO.

True, I may easily mask it to the world,
Dressing my crimes in honourable guise;
But can I hide my motives from myself?
The blood-stain'd image of yon slaughter'd youth

Is ever present to my tortur'd thoughts,
And mocks my resolution.

MARGARET.

Most infirm !

Most spiritless ! Thou shadow of thyself !
Doing the deed, but wanting heart to win
The rich reward which follows from the deed.
Daring to sin, but impotent to plead
The proud excuse which makes the sin half sinless.
Go, go, my lord, your conduct galls me much,
Compels me too to leave you to the fate
Decreed for petty villains, tame transgressors,
Who yield themselves self-vanquish'd to the laws
They have not force to trample under foot.
I cannot ask the emperor to support
One, who deserts himself. Ginori comes.
Now, Lorenzino, prove yourself a man.

SCENE II.

GINORI. MARGARET. LORENZINO.

GINORI.

Princess, attend. I come to bear you hence.
Long have I worn you, lady, in my heart,
And lov'd you as my child. It pains me sorely
To think in aught I should have cause to deem you
Less worthy than before. A foul report
Steals through the city, that the Duke is dead,
Is murder'd in his chamber. Yester-eve—
Suspicion is a vile unfriendly inmate
Whom I am loth to harbour—

MARGARET.

Give it vent.

The Duke is dead. Thanks to the gallant chief
Who so aveng'd his country and myself.

GINORI.

The chief! what chief? Lives there a man so lost—

MARGARET.

Why how should man be punish'd, but *by man* ?
The daring spirit never wants the means
To compass its intents. Thou poor of soul !
What you refus'd, another has achiev'd :
There stands the dread avenger of my wrongs !
Let me not, Sir, detain you——

GINORI.

Lorenzino !

MARGARET.

—Though much be done, still much remains to do.
Your's is a task important to the state,
Which brooks not easily this long delay.

GINORI.

Why what a world is this ! Did he, did he,
The son of peace, of elegance, and arts,
Whose pale heart fail'd him at the sight of steel
Recoiling from the instruments of war,
Did he commit this base and murderous deed ?
O what a strange, incongruous thing is man !

Methought his luxury and love of ease
Would have preserv'd him from the guilt of blood !

MARGARET. [To LORENZINO.

Are you awake ? this moment is your own,
Use it, or meet your fate.

LORENZINO.

I'm in the toils,
And must proceed, or perish.

GINORI.

Hold. For her,
I leave her to the secret stings of conscience ;
Her high birth places her without the laws.
But you, who are a subject to the state,
Shall not elude its justice.

LORENZINO.

Lord Ginori,
Bar not my path, lest I be driven to madness,
And throw a wild defiance in the teeth
Of your unmanner'd menace. Give me way,

I go to address the people, 'tis to them
That I must give account.

MARGARET.

The storm is up,
And Lorenzino is again himself,
Great as of old, and born to rule mankind.

LORENZINO.

If I perforce *must on*, I dare you to 't.
Follow me to the forum, tell your tale,
And try who best can sway the popular mind.
Despair affords me energy to plead,
And if I fall, I will not fall inglorious.

MARGARET.

Why this is as it should be. Ere the sun
Kisses the western wave, my heart foretels
Lorenzo will be Duke.

ATTENDANT, to LORENZINO.

My lord, your friends
Are arming in the palace. Fame reports
That the young Duke is dead. Bianchi, too,

The attendant of the lady Laurentilla,
Is seiz'd on and detain'd. [*Exit ATTENDANT.*]

GINORI.

My natal foil,
Not for myself, I care not for myself,
For thee alone, dear country of my fathers,
Am I constrain'd to compromise with guilt.
I will not suffer thee to be the prey
Of wretches such as these.—That you are strong
In interest and in wealth and armed friends,
And have a tongue well disciplin'd and train'd
With apt delusions to mislead the crowd
'Twere folly to deny. Yet I am bold
To think the plainness of my honesty
Might put your vaunted cunning to the proof.
However, Sir, I will not press you further.
This instant quit the city, and Ginori
Shall not oppose your flight.

MARGARET.

Thou weak old man,

To judge of others by the narrow bounds
 Which limit thine own views! will Lorenzino,
 The far-renown'd and matchless Lorenzino,
 Tamely forego the gorgeous prize of empire,
 Bury in indolence his golden hopes,
 And sink unheard to quiet nothingness?
 Thou can'st not seriously indulge the thought.

SCENE III.

LORENZINO. MARGARET. GINORI. LAURENTILLA.
 ATTENDANT.

LAURENTILLA.

I pray you, let me see him. I must see him.
 Exclude me from my brother! Fie on 't, fie!
 My only brother too—the dear, dear son
 Of my lamented mother! I *will* see him.
 And yet I know not wherefore I should seek him.
 A cruel brother has he been to me.
 But do not say that I complain of him,
 For that, methinks, would be unfisterly.

ATTENDANT.

My lord, I know not wherefore, but the news
Of her attendant's seizure, as it seems,
Has much derang'd the mind of my young lady.
Most strange and incoherent is her speech,
As you yourself have heard. She ask'd to see you :
Her strong impatience would not wait your coming,
And hither, Sir, have I conducted her.

LAURENTILLA.

Yes, you did right. I shall remember you ;
And when the Duke acknowledges his wife,
There will be some one to reward you for 't.
In very truth there will. You may go now.

[Exit ATT.]

GINORI.

O pretty Laurentilla, is it thus ?
Were you the destin'd bride he told me of ?
I had a faint conjecture it was so,
And thy wild tongue confirms me in the thought.
Then thou indeed art privileg'd to mourn

Above the daily sorrowers of the earth,
To lose a lover is the lot of many,
Beauteous and gentle as thyself, sweet maid:
To lose him by a brother's hand is sad
Beyond the wonted wretchedness of life,
Sad even to madness. Poor, poor Laurentilla!

LAURENTILLA.

Aye, poor enough, Heaven knows. You're very
good

Thus to take pity on me, for the world
Has used me hardly. So it did my lord.
But never mind, we shall be friends anon.
Friends! Lorenzino was my husband's friend.
I had a thing to say. But it is gone,

LORENZINO.

And I, the while, am planning schemes of power,
And vesting me with honours gain'd by blood!
What has a wretch like me to do with power,
Or rank, or any thing above the herd?
Would that my fate had plac'd me in the vale

Of humble privacy and still content,
Where, in unletter'd ignorance, unknown,
And innocent of fame, and all the cares
Ambition feels, I might have liv'd secure,
And 'scap'd these horrors which encompass me.
Woman, look yonder, and behold thy work; [To MARG.
Nay, struggle not, nor call me rough, nor stern :
Respect is at an end, we're equals now,
Equals in misery and in guilt—Thou murderers!

LAURENTILLA.

Hush—not a word of murder. Ere he died,
He charg'd me to be secret. Hush, hush, hush.
I would not break my promise for the world.
My good lord only broke his promise once,
And lost his life for't. But 'twas most unjust.
Surely his father had no right to wed him,
In spite of his own will, to one he lik'd not.
Why do you turn aside, and hide your face?
Are you not well, fair lady? I would bind,

To do you good, my kerchief round your brows,
Were it not wet with tears.

MARGARET.

Down, down, heart,
Nor in the hour of trial show thy weakness.

LAURENTILLA.

Mercy defend and guard me! It is she,
It is her very self! Nay, frown not on me,
For I accuse you not. Full well I know
'Twas not *your* hand that did it. Save me, fave me.
Yet what have I to fear from mortal being?
Defolate as I am, I can but die—
And death were to relieve me from my woes.
I wish it—I embrace it—Death—death—death.

[*Falls on* GINORI.

LORENZINO.

Ginori, you have conquer'd. It is done.
The heavy hand of justice is upon me,
And to resist were vain. I will not on,
And am afraid to die. Flight, instant flight,

Is the sole refuge of my wounded spirit.
Florence I never shall behold again.
If yon fair saint, I dare not call her sister,
Survive this fatal shock, protect her youth,
And be a father to her innocence.
For me—severe and comfortless remorse
Will blast my future life—my very name,
Which once, methought, would shine among the first,
Shall be recorded only to my shame,
Only recounted to be heard with curses.
Far from my native country and my home
To the dim shades of solitude I fly,
And dedicate my days to unavailing woe.

[Exit.

GINORI.

How mischievous are talents ill directed !
How terrible is genius uncontrol'd
By the due laws of pure morality !
Yes, Laurentilla, yes : if thou surviv'st,
I will indeed be guardian to thy youth.

Thy virtues might have merited a fate
Other than this. But man, half-fighted man,
Must not attempt to scan the ways of Heaven.
Surely there is a life beyond the tomb,
Where all these inconsistencies may cease,
And virtue be rewarded as it ought.



SONNETS.

Ode.

Terreum credis mihi pectus? Ah si
Semper obducto requiescet aere!

Sum nec exacta, miser heu, dolerem

Gaudia vita,

Ne nec aversum quereretur amens

Nymphæ, quæ sese, viduata, deflet,

Neque mordaci nimium fidelem

2 T 3 V Vocce lacerat.

Ipsa testetur vaga Luna nostram,

Dum jubar purum per inane manat,

Plana luserunt quoties amoris

Somnia mentem.

Ille cum calo tacto rateret,

Audit crebra gemitum querelæ,

Sæpe non facta fuit illa flamma

Conscia nostræ.

Viscus et jamjam calor ille vivit.

Sæpe desertam recolo Camillam,

Et mihi mæsta facies puellæ

Sæpe recurat.

Perge me diuis onerare verbis,

Et licet lingua male provocâris

Metuæ nunquam meminisse formæ

Charæ, pigebit.

I.

COLD is the heart that feels not beauty's power,

And base is he who knows not how to love :

And sad and heavy is the passing hour

To the poor wretch no warm affections move.

When man arose exulting from the dust,

Nature exclaim'd ' Son, be thou lord of all ;'

Accept with filial awe the mighty trust,

And list obedient to the powerful call

Of holy passion glowing in thy breast :

For when she gave all the round world contain'd,

To elevate thee high above the rest

Of her fair work creation, she ordain'd

Thy inward soul peculiar joys should prove ;

And of the laughing train the chief is Love.

II.

MY Laura, I am wild and rude of speech,
And all untutor'd in the ways of love;
But thou, my girl, this fault'ring tongue shalt teach
To tell what oft before in vain it strove.

Yes, my dear play-fellow, that smile of thine,
Which in life's early morning bade me frame
In praise of thee full many an uncouth line,
Now bids me fearless own my secret flame.

I love thee, Laura. Dost thou hear me, sweet?
I love thee, girl. Ah! what have I confess?
Cease, cease fond palpitating heart to beat.
She hears. She frowns not. Laura, I am blest.

Ah! thus then let me thank thee for my bliss,
Thus seal our contract—with this eager kiss.

III.

LAURA, full oft in childhood's early day

I led thee, playful, through the verdant mead;
Full oft for thee I tun'd my infant lay,
And twin'd the myrtle-garland for thy head.

In vain, my gentle girl, thy play-mates strove
With guileless art my youthful love to gain;
In vain for me the myrtle wreath they wove,
For me they tun'd the song of praise in vain.

And could'st thou think that *friendship* steel'd my breast
And bade me careless hear each virgin sigh,
That robb'd my bosom of its wonted rest,
That gave a speaking lustre to my eye?

No, Laura, it was love—That love sincere,
Which owns thy influence in this silent tear.

IV.

THEY tell me that in opening life the hue
 Of rosy health bloom'd on my glowing cheek ;
 That my full eye sparkled with liquid blue,
 And seem'd with strong intelligence to speak ;

They tell me, too, that in luxuriance wild
 Wav'd my dark locks : perchance they tell me truth ;
 For 'tis an adage that the loveliest child
 Makes in advancing age the forrier youth.

So has it been with me. In vain I seek
 To trace the ^{rosy} ~~rosate~~ hue of healthful red,
 Dull is my eye, and colourless my cheek,
 And gone the flowing honours of my head :

But still remains unchang'd my better part,
 Still true to love and Laura is my heart.

vid. Monthly Mag. July 1796. p. 490.

V.

GLIDE on, glide on, resplendent Queen of night,
And as thou sail'st along yon azure main,
Silv'ring the waves of heaven with liquid light,
Lift, lift propitious to my votive strain :

And, ah ! if there my absent mistress rove,
Bend thy mild eye on Clifton's green retreat ;
Shed thy soft beam o'er Laura's fav'rite grove,
And guide with radiance meek her wand'ring feet.

Yes, my pale messenger, glide on, glide on,
And haste to tell her in the whisp'ring gale
That this fond heart is her's, and her's alone ;
And when my Laura hears thy pleasing tale,

The breath of eve a grateful sigh shall bear
To thank thee, friend of lovers, for thy care.

VI.

I PRAY you, mock me not. I am not us'd
To find thee thus obdurate and severe.
Surely my offering will not be refus'd,
If to thy heart my image still be dear.

What though it be the semblance of a youth
Whom Nature has but little grac'd without,
Yet 'tis the form of one who loves with truth,
One who adores with passion most devout,

One who has *long* ador'd, one who was taught
Even in his very childhood to beguile
The cares of life by cherishing the thought,
That Laura lov'd him——Blessings on the smile

Of my benignant girl! it ends my pain,
And tells me that I have not sued in vain.

VII.

NAY, Laura, weep not thus. I do not jest.

I swear by yonder blessed star of eve,

I am most true, most faithful. Much I grieve,

Folding my arms across my mournful breast,

To see thee, like a drooping flower, deprest

By the rude breath of Spring. I pray thee leave

This idle fear, I know not to deceive ;

Then cheer thee, love, and bid thy spirit rest.

Believe me, liberal Heaven can ne'er bestow

A richer gift, nor can this ^{fond} ~~poor~~ heart know

Aught like thyself to sooth my ^{cherish'd} ~~aching~~ woe :

I have no joy, no comfort but in thee ;

Nor till the vital stream shall cease to flow,

From thy soft bondage shall I e'er be free.

VIII.

DEEP glow'd the mountain top with golden day,

^{When}
~~My~~ Laura past me with indignant feet.

Swift I pursued, my Mistress dear to greet,
Who chid in angry mood my long delay.

She had a right to chide. But well I knew

Her tranquil nature could not long refrain

From peace ^{from} ~~and~~ joy. I led her to the plain,

The plain which glisten'd with the night-fall'n dew.

I from her slipper wip'd the damps away,

I spread her kerchief o'er yon rugged seat,

Placing my own beneath her gentle feet,

To screen them from the cold and chilling clay,

While she her white arm on my shoulder laid,

And with a grateful lip my care repaid.

FINIS.



